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DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
WASHINGTON

June 19, 1961

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Secretary  
THROUGH: S/S  
FROM: Ambassador L. E. Thompson RLJ  
SUBJECT: The Berlin Question

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Eugene ET  
6/27/61

ANALYSIS

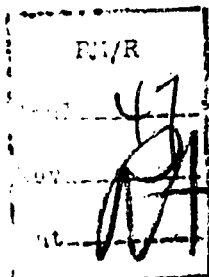
It is not entirely clear what weight Khrushchev gives to the various factors involved in the Berlin and German question. The following would appear, however, to be his principal objectives:

1. To stabilize the regime in East Germany and prepare the way for the eventual recognition of the East German regime;
2. To legalize the eastern frontiers of Germany;
3. To neutralize Berlin as a first step and prepare for its eventual take-over by the GDR;
4. To weaken if not break up the NATO alliance; and
5. To discredit the United States or at least seriously damage our prestige.

I do not think this latter point is his principal objective since his Free City proposal was in fact designed to accomplish his objectives while saving face for us. I believe that Khrushchev was surprised and disappointed at our reaction to his proposal.

I do not believe that Khrushchev is bluffing and believe that he will at least go through with his separate peace treaty. He has left himself an out by making it possible for the East Germans not to interfere seriously with our rights of access,

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but even in these circumstances the conclusion of a separate peace treaty would have disadvantages for both the West Germans and the Western allies. The very most we could hope for would leave us in a worse position than we are now and would increase to a considerable degree the de facto recognition of the GDR. It is therefore to our advantage to prevent if possible the conclusion of a separate peace treaty.

I suggest that our policy for dealing with this problem should be one which 1) appears reasonable to public opinion in the United States as well as the rest of the world; 2) maintains the unity of our alliance; 3) would avoid so far as possible any miscalculation on the part of the Soviets. Public opinion is important to the Soviets and they will be far more dangerous if their position has wide public support. I believe it is of the highest importance that we have the support of our allies, especially the British, during the early phases of the problem. The greatest danger of miscalculation on the part of the Soviets comes from their imperfect understanding of the way democracies work. Khrushchev can maintain absolute control over his policy and does not appreciate the role which public opinion plays in a democracy.

It appears to me that the problem divides itself into four periods of time:

1. From now until the German elections;
2. From the German election until the convocation by the Soviets of a Peace Conference;
3. The period between the conclusion of a treaty and its entry into effect; and
4. The implementation of a separate peace treaty.

I consider it highly important that we attempt to reach decisions now on our policy during all phases of this problem, as otherwise we are in danger of drifting and losing opportunities by default. For example, it is extremely difficult to draft a reply to the Soviet Aide Memoire until we have actually determined what our final policy will be in a show-down on the Berlin problem.

PERIOD FROM NOW UNTIL THE GERMAN ELECTIONS

For many reasons, I believe we should have an alternative to put forward to the Soviet Free City proposal at an appropriate time.

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It is clearly impossible, however, to do this until after the German elections, as Adenauer will most certainly not support any alternative proposal until the elections are over. I suggest that during this period we should take actions which will convince the Soviets of our seriousness but will not unduly alarm public opinion or our allies. The following actions might be considered in this connection:

1. I suggest we should immediately approach the West Germans and our allies with a proposal to hold a referendum in West Berlin on the question as to whether they prefer the Soviet Free City proposal or the maintenance of the present situation pending the reunification of Germany. This should be held under international supervision if feasible but as a minimum observers should be invited from all countries. Such a referendum would go far to discredit the Free City proposal and make it difficult for the Soviets to impose it upon an unwilling population.
2. Since the Soviets presented us at Vienna with proposals on both the Berlin problem and that of atomic testing, the early resumption of testing might help convince them that we are serious in our attitude on the Berlin problem.
3. We should make strenuous efforts to reach agreement with the British on our policy during this and the subsequent period at least. In order to achieve this it might be advisable to abandon attempts to commit the British now to a definite action when the show-down comes.
4. We should make military preparations of a nature which would not become known to the general public but which would be picked up by Soviet Intelligence.
5. We should consider again extending an invitation to Marshal Verzhinin to return the Twining visit. This would enable us to impress the Soviet military both with our strength and our determination. If this were done I believe we should show the Soviet delegation the maximum possible consistent with our security interests.

PERIOD FROM GERMAN ELECTIONS TO SOVIET CONVOCAION  
OF PEACE CONFERENCE

1. During this period it is highly probable that the Soviets will attempt bilateral negotiations with the West Germans. We should decide now whether this is desirable and if so what advice we should give the West Germans regarding such negotiations. In

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my view, we should not attempt to prevent such negotiations if the Germans desire them but should not encourage them, mainly for the reason that the Germans are unlikely to be willing to make a concession on the frontier problem, which the Western allies could easily do if necessary to resolve the problem.

2. We should prepare now and have ready to put forward promptly after the German elections an alternative to the Soviet Free City proposal and to their plan for a separate treaty. We should if possible put the Soviets in a position of saying "no" to a proposal which would avoid the danger of war over the Berlin question instead of being in that position ourselves, as is the case today. I do not feel competent to suggest what this alternative could be, but believe the following proposals might be considered:

a) An all-Berlin solution. I do not myself favor this as I believe it would have most of the disadvantages of the Free City proposal. The Soviets would consider that any proposal involving all of Berlin would mean a major concession on their part for which they would want concessions, and their terms would be more onerous than if a solution involved only West Berlin. Nevertheless, we might put forward such a solution with a view to the Soviets turning it down. If we do, I suggest that it would be essential to have some kind of negative veto as we had in Vienna; that is, all four Powers would have to agree in order to interfere with any actions taken by the Berlin Senate. The Soviets would never accept an all-Berlin solution unless they were able to control the refugee flow.

b) I believe we could put forward a modification of our Geneva peace package proposal, which would appear reasonable to public opinion and which would in fact have considerable appeal to the Soviets. This would consist of setting up an all-German Commission, providing a series of steps leading up to a referendum in both parts of Germany at the end of a 7-year period, unilateral declaration by the British, the French and ourselves that at an eventual peace conference we would not support any change in the present frontiers, and possibly a NATO-Warsaw Pact non-aggression agreement, and the interim solution for the Berlin problem be put forward at Geneva.

c) We might agree not to oppose a separate peace treaty provided it contained a protocol making provision for an interim Berlin solution. This could be coupled with the other proposals contained in point b) above.

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There are various ways in which such proposals might be put forward. One would be by a Note or public declaration by the Western Powers; another would be the calling of a high-level conference, and a third would be by our acceptance of a Soviet invitation to a peace conference.

PERIOD BETWEEN CONCLUSION BY THE SOVIETS OF SEPARATE  
TREATY AND ITS ENTRY INTO FORCE

If matters go this far, I suggest we should go all out in military preparations in an effort to convince the Soviets that we mean business, but we should do so in such a way as to not cut off the Soviet escape route, namely, the failure of the East Germans actually to interfere with our access in a manner unacceptable to us. This period might be short and the moves we make should be worked out well in advance.

PERIOD AFTER ENTRY INTO FORCE OF SEPARATE TREATY

This is of course the most difficult decision of all. In view of both the French and British attitudes I would favor, in order to get their support, that we begin with an air-lift, which means that the Soviets and East Germans would either have to allow it to operate or take the first belligerent move. At the same time, our troops would be disposed in battle formation and if the East Germans were blocking our land access we should notify them that after a given period of time we would use whatever force was necessary to reopen it. If no solution is reached at this point we should then proceed with military action, including the use of tactical atomic weapons. Before this happens other elements in the contingency plans could be brought into operation, but these should be carefully considered in order that the Soviets not be led to believe that economic and political sanctions is as far as we intend to go.

cc - Mr. Acheson  
- Mr. Kohler  
- Mr. Bohlen  
- Mr. McGhee

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